

Georgina Rivera
35 Conard Drive
West Hartford, CT 06107
February 21, 2023

Request for Teacher Residency Funding to be included in HB 6659: AAC the State Budget for the Biennium ending June 30, 2025, and making appropriations therefor.

Dear Representative Farrar, Senator Slapp, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Georgina Rivera and I am from West Hartford, CT. I currently serve as an elementary school principal in West Hartford at Charter Oak International Academy and formerly at Greene-Hills School in Bristol, CT. In addition I hold an executive role on a National Education Board, Vice President of [NCSM: Leadership in Mathematics Education](#) where we advocate for equitable mathematics instruction and help mathematics leaders at the national level through professional learning, conferences, and advocacy.

I am asking for your support in increasing educator diversity for all districts and supporting workforce development by designating \$5.5 million as a line item in the State Department of Education section of the state budget. The funds would support the efforts of any Connecticut district partnering with a Residency Program that is specifically committed to training teachers of color. It is a moral imperative that our students in Connecticut, who represent diverse populations, have the opportunity to see themselves represented by their teachers. Researchers from John Hopkins found that if students had at least one black teacher they were 13% more likely to enroll in college and if they had two black teachers this increased to 32% ([NBER](#), 2018). Educational leaders know that if we want better outcomes for all students, especially students of color, we must ensure we continue to support programs that increase educator diversity.

One such program is the [CT-TRP](#), which is an 18th-month alternative route to certification program that provides residents with a salary and benefits while attending courses.

The teaching candidates work side-by-side with a mentor teacher for the school year and are guaranteed a full-time teaching position upon completion of the program and certification requirements. Over three years, CT-TRP has already included 69 residents of color. With your support, the program may certify up to an additional 120 teachers of color in CT in the next two years. In addition, the hands-on training is a pathway to a lifelong career and economic stability for those who are underemployed or unemployed.

I have been a mentor for three TRP candidates and I have personally witnessed the power of the program. As a mentor, I have seen the direct impact on the students, school, families and community that TRP candidates bring into schools. Funding a program like this would ensure greater student outcomes for students of color in Connecticut and create a model for other states to emulate. . There is a myth out there that people of color do not want to enter the teaching force or that school districts cannot find diverse candidates to hire. However,

the true story is that we have diverse staff members working both inside our schools, in after school programs or in many other fields. These individuals have a strong desire to become educators but the costly barriers of becoming an educator prevents them from stepping into their true passion.

At this point you may be wondering, how could I know this? The reality is I was one of these. An educator that faced systemic barriers to enter the teaching profession. As a first generation latina and multilingual learner, I never once had the opportunity to see myself represented in the teaching force. I had always dreamed of being a teacher. The reason I became a teacher was so that I could be the teacher I always needed. On the journey, I had to overcome many barriers. There were the cost barriers and the feeling of othering as I was one of two teachers of color that graduated in my class. I endured microaggressions when I started teaching because the reality is I was entering a profession that was mostly a space held by people that were unlike me. I lacked true mentorship because my teaching style is more culturally responsive than those of my colleagues. Once I got into the classroom, none of this mattered because my students were able to see themselves in me and I knew I was exactly where I was supposed to be.

Additionally, as a principal of an elementary school, it is very difficult to find diverse teachers when hiring teachers for our children and their families. I have to find more effective ways to recruit and help to certify some of the excellent staff I already have in my building who want to become certified educators. As a TRP mentor, I nominated and mentored two candidates in the program, and they have graduated and are currently teaching. One was our STEM tutors, a Hispanic male who loves to teach and peak students' curiosity in STEM. Students gravitated towards his style of teaching and his magnetic personality. I am proud to say as a result of the TRP program, he is now a bilingual teacher in a fifth grade classroom and for the first time Latinx students can now see themselves represented as a teacher. In addition, one of our special education paraeducators, a black male, loved working with students and wanted to become a teacher. I wrote him a letter and he went through the program and today he is a second grade teacher.

As a result of the funding and support TRP gave, generations of children of color will now see a black and hispanic male in an elementary school, which we know will increase their chances of graduating high school and attending college. When I asked the teachers about their stories, I heard about similar barriers that I have to overcome. financial barriers, someone believing in them, and the overwhelming number of steps it takes to become an educator made it seem impossible for them to become certified teachers. Both candidates already held important jobs, one in the military and another as a transportation director for The Open Choice program. CT-TRP removed the barriers by providing stable income, coursework, and mentorship along with a cohort where the teacher developed a sense of belonging.

Finally, as the Vice President of a national board that supports mathematics leaders, I know there is a great need to have more diverse teachers in STEM courses. As part of our organization, we follow the achievement of all students and analyze trends. In our latest Essential Action Series book; *Culturally Relevant Leadership in Mathematics Education* we state in the introduction that the workforce of mathematics teachers does not mirror the

diversity of our student population. As a result we need to diversify the teachers and also reflect upon our practices.

In addition, CT-TRP is going to run a cohort in the next year specifically focused on cultivating math teachers which will help to resolve the issues we have finding teachers for STEM jobs across this state. Not only will this program be life changing for those entering the teaching field and also for the children we serve here in Connecticut when they see themselves represented in mathematics classrooms across the state.

While well intentioned, the funding mechanism enacted for Residency Programs within the 2022-23 biennial budget is inadequate to meet the needs of recruiting and retaining teachers of color across all Connecticut public schools and for the diverse children we serve. You have a unique opportunity to fund a program which will not only create more teachers to ensure Connecticut has a strong teaching force, you will also support a program that increases student outcomes. Connecticut would be a model for other states and your vote could be the one that helps to grow this program and create a national model for school districts across the country. I appreciate your consideration of this important request and look forward to the state financially supporting teacher residency.

If you have any other questions I would love to speak with you about the importance of this program and the direct impact I have seen it make in my schools and in my personal life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Georgina Rivera". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Georgina Rivera
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NCSM Vice President and 2023 Conference Chair